



From: **Office of the Mayor**

Latoya Hunter, Assistant Director of Media Relations, Social Media & Digital Integration
Office of the Mayor | lhunter@city.cleveland.oh.us
(216)-664-4303

Joan Mazzolini, Chief of Communication
Cleveland City Council | jmazzolini@clevelandcitycouncil.org
(216) 664-4466

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 22, 2019

Mayor Jackson, Cleveland City Council and Local Organizations Announce *Lead Safe Cleveland* Coalition will address lead exposure through public/private accountability, adaptable legislation

CLEVELAND – Mayor Frank G. Jackson, Council President Kevin J. Kelley, Councilman Blaine Griffin, [Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation](#) President Mitchell Balk, and [Environmental Health Watch](#) Executive Director Kim Foreman and more than two dozen partners today announced, *Lead Safe Cleveland*, a local coalition to address lead poisoning. The coalition unveiled a five-point action plan and invited the community to join the dozens of major local organizations already committed to the work.

There is no safe blood level of lead. In a recent [Case Western Reserve University Study](#), data showed that 93.5 percent of children tested had some exposure to lead, which at even low levels can damage a developing brain and cause lifelong problems with education, behavior, and health.

Lead Safe Cleveland will pursue a comprehensive, sustainable, and preventive approach that merges: smart, adaptable public policies and legislation; knowledgeable agencies willing to collaborate; proven community programs; and public and private sector accountability. *Lead Safe Cleveland* does not require that all homes be free from lead, but rather allows for the use of regularly maintained *interim controls*, or safety measures to protect children from lead exposure.

The Five-Point Action Plan

- 1) Garner public input and establish a community-wide goal and timeline.**
- 2) Introduce legislation.** As Chair of Cleveland City Council's Health and Human Services Committee, Councilman Griffin –in partnership with Lead Safe Cleveland –is creating comprehensive legislation that covers four key areas: Prevention; Screening of Children; Treatments and Interventions; and Education and Outreach. It will lead to an overall rework of city ordinance Chapter 240 with input from the coalition.
- 3) Host the Cleveland Lead Safe Summit.** The Summit is an opportunity to learn more from experts and peer cities, but more importantly, an opportunity for Cleveland to convene and work on a lead safe solution. Cleveland will welcome national experts,

landlords, media, advocates, community members, elected officials, and others. The Summit will elevate resident stories, hear the challenges of landlords, and address tenant rights and workforce development.

- 4) **Create a Cleveland Lead Safe Home Fund.** *Lead Safe Cleveland* will model a Lead Safe Home Fund and explore its capitalization. In order to create a Lead Safe Home Fund, the Coalition will leave no funding source unexplored.
- 5) **Advocate for state and federal support.** *Lead Safe Cleveland* is encouraged by Governor's DeWine's platform, prioritizing childhood initiatives. The Coalition hopes to partner directly with him and his administration, as well as garner federal support.

Philanthropic Support and Participating Organizations

Initial philanthropic support for *Lead Safe Cleveland* comes from the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation; the George Gund Foundation, the Saint Luke's Foundation; The Cleveland Foundation; the Bruening Foundation; the Sisters of Charity Foundation; the Third Federal Foundation; and United Way of Greater Cleveland. With their support, *Lead Safe Cleveland* has already commissioned research and begun a lead poisoning landscape analysis.

Community organizations are chairs of the *Lead Safe Cleveland* committees, including the: **Governance Committee** – The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation; **Policy Committee** – Enterprise Community Partners; **Community Engagement Committee** – Environmental Health Watch; **Resource Development Committee** – The George Gund Foundation; **Cleveland Lead Safe Summit Committee** – United Way of Greater Cleveland

Greater Cleveland can join the coalition, by emailing a request to leadsafecl@city.cleveland.oh.us.

Lead Safe Cleveland Elevates Work Already Being Done

Years of work locally and in concert with national experts has led to creating what will be Cleveland's lead safe solution.

Under Mayor Jackson's leadership, the City has operated the Healthy Homes Interdepartmental Initiative since 2016, which includes representatives across city departments, working together to dissolve operational silos and collaboratively tackle lead poisoning. The city has since launched Accella portal as a way for citizens to look up lead status and housing code violations of properties.

Building and Housing has hired new staff and revamped its rental registry and inspection process. There have been 59,000 rental units registered and renewed during Mayor Jackson's term, including randomized lead dust inspections and improved landlord outreach. The Department of Public Health has also increased staffing levels and began placarding homes to warn the public that a child was poisoned in the home, and the home is legally uninhabitable until the lead is remediated.

In 2018, City, County, philanthropic, and nonprofit leaders came together around a series of learning exchanges, gathering best practices from across the country. A public-private contingent attended the HUD Healthy Homes Conference in June of this year, followed by a group of nearly 30 local leaders taking part in a peer-to-peer site visit in Rochester, New York, in November.

Each stop included in-depth discussions with national lead poisoning prevention experts, including thought leaders from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Center for Healthy Housing, and leaders from several major cities.

Press conference speakers' thoughts on *Lead Safe Cleveland*:

Mayor Frank G. Jackson

"Lead poisoning affects all of us, and we all need to take responsibility for addressing it. This issue affects everything from educational attainment to criminal justice, housing stability and workforce development. The costs of lead poisoning are high—to our children, our families, our community, and our region. Cleveland's families deserve better and the goal of Lead Safe Cleveland is to find solutions that will work today, tomorrow, and well into the future."

Cleveland City Council President Kevin J. Kelley

"We know more about lead poisoning than most other environmental health issues. And solutions to lead poisoning are well-documented. Our challenge is turning what we know into what we can do. Finding a solution to lead poisoning can be done, and we've already started."

Chair of the Cleveland City Council Health Committee Councilman Blaine Griffin

"We *know* we can create a lead safe Cleveland. It's time for our community to take our moonshot. To those Clevelanders struggling with housing insecurity, I want to assure you that legislation will meet you where you're at, not create red tape or bureaucracy that contributes to instability. To the children of Cleveland, I promise you this legislation is only the first step. This coalition is committed to new policies, and so much more to address this issue once and for all."

Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation President Mitchell Balk

A complex, systemic issue like lead poisoning requires a comprehensive, sustainable, and preventive approach. It requires great minds from all sectors to collaborative, innovate, and lead—*together*. This can be done. This must be done—for our children today and for generations of Clevelanders yet unborn."

Environmental Health Watch Executive Director Kim Foreman

"We can't become sensitized and comfortable with analyzing maps, percentages, data points, figures. We can't keep talking about racial equity, health disparities, or the conditions of people who are impacted. *Lead Safe Cleveland* must be intentional. It has to dedicate time to building trust and develop authentic partnerships with community, deliver on what we claim is important, and continue to celebrate real action and successes."

Follow the coalition's conversation about upcoming news, events and legislation on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter via #LeadSafeCLE

About the City of Cleveland

The City of Cleveland is committed to improving the quality of life of its residents by strengthening neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing diversity and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, play and do business. For more information on the City of Cleveland, visit online at www.city.cleveland.oh.us , Twitter at [@cityofcleveland](https://twitter.com/cityofcleveland) or Facebook at www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland.

###